

Paul's Testimony

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Date: 22 November 2015

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning.
- If there's any visitors here with us this morning, then you're particularly welcome. I don't think there are any visitors this morning. Oh yes, there are any visitors this morning.
- Good to see you. And you're especially welcome. Tea and coffee at the end with cakes and juice. If you're able to stay and you've got permission to stay and you encourage your grandparents to stay, then you'll stay.
- Evening service is at 6 this evening and we'll be taking by myself, God willing. Youth Fellowship meets at half past 7 or 20 past half past 7 here.
- Usually we're in the room at the back there, which is a fair bit of working on there just now. And the Kellers have offered to take the Wyeth to their house tonight. But we'll meet here and head from here with lifts out to their house.
- [1 : 0 8] So Wyeth, as usual, but the venue will change. Ladies' Bible study meets at 8pm tomorrow at Chiraclit again.
- And the First Group Fellowship meets in the Church of Scotland Hall on Tuesday at half past 7. I wrote to the family prayer meeting at 8 o'clock as the last two weeks.
- The committee room is where it should be. If we meet in the committee room and we need to change, we'll change from there. Prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past 7 in Kildan Cruises.
- And Christianity Explored continues in the Regal Hebrides at half past 7 on Thursday. The services next floor is day 11am in English, taken by myself.
- And 6pm will be a Gaelic service taken by John McSween. 8pm the English Fellowship and there will be a particular focus on the persecuted church for this fellowship on next Sunday.
- [2 : 0 9] A couple more notices. There will be a two-day conference on local evangelism in the Cabaret Fiatel in Stornome on Friday the 4th and Saturday the 5th of December. The main speaker will be the Reverend David Robertson, who's the moderator.
- And bookings can be made through the Free Church website. And also on the leaflets, which I think probably one or two are still out at the door. A £10 fee, including coffee and lunch on Saturday, is taken at registration.
- But really just to highlight that and to encourage as many as possible to go to that, I think it will be a great event. And it would be good to make use of it and to support it.
- And the Reverend David Robertson will take the morning service on the 6th of December after that event. The Scalping Church will be joining with us on that morning service too.
- A couple more things. Thank you to everybody who did so much last night at the meal. It's good to see so many after. And it was very encouraging to be part of it.
- [3 : 1 6] Those who brought dishes full of food. There's no food now in the dishes. But the dishes are in the hall. Well, in the corridor, I decided to press them at the back there. So please go and collect them at the end if you're able to.

And if you can't find your dishes, go and see Peggy, she says, and she will try and locate them. The last thing is the Christmas Fund Day, which I mentioned last week.

Again, just advanced notification. It's hoped to have a Christmas Fund Day for kids here in the CC on the 12th of December from 10 to 1. And to that end, we're looking for volunteers to help.

We don't need just upfront people, but helpers in the kitchen, those who do registration at the door, those who help in craft activities, etc. So please, if you're able to help with this, then put your name on the sheet that's at the door.

If you put your name on the sheet on the door last week, please put it up on the sheet on the door this week as well. Because we don't know where the sheet from last week is. So, 12th of December, please take note of that.

[4 : 27] I think these are all the notices. So let's begin service and worship God by singing to his praise from Psalm 116.

Psalm 116, the words on the screen in just a moment. I love the Lord because my voice and prayer is seated here. I, while I live, would call on him to bow to me his ear of death.

The cords that saw us down about me compass ring. The pains of hell could hold in me a grief and trouble find. Upon the name of God, O Lord, then could I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord.

I do thee humbly pray. God merciful and righteous is, ye gracious is our God. God saves the meek. I was brought low. He did me help. I fall.

These verses to God's praise. Stand to sing. I love the Lord because my voice and prayer cheated here.

[5 : 38] I, while I live, will call on him to bow to me his ear.

The death, the corpse, and sorrow, did a birth me compass ring.

The pins of hell to hold on me. I keep and trouble found.

Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord.

I do thee humbly pray. Have you got one more person?

[7 : 07] No. Let's pray. Let's unite our marching prayer. Let's pray. Our heavenly Father, we thank you for this your day.

And we thank you that as we take the words of scripture upon our lips and meditate upon them in our hearts, we are enabled to see that you are the God who loves us, that you are the God who calls us to come to you and to call upon your name.

We thank you that you are the God who saves us. And you are the one who, in your mercy, withholds from us the punishment that our sins attract.

And in your grace, Lord, you have given us that salvation which was bought at such high price by Jesus. We thank you that this is the Lord's day and we remember each Lord's day that our Saviour, he died and he rose again.

We thank you that we gather in the name of Jesus. We thank you that we call upon the name of Jesus. And we thank you that as we do so, we are given that assurance that we will be heard because we come in faith.

[8 : 27] We come in humility. Recognising that you are the God of heaven and earth, the one who is all-powerful and in control of all things.

And yet you are the God who hears and who answers the individual prayers of our hearts. And so we pray that you would quieten our hearts, even in this moment.

We pray, Lord, that you would clear our minds of all that would distract us from looking to you. We pray that you would fill us and fill us place with the Holy Spirit that we may draw near in worship.

Lord, that we would pray a light that our hearts would be filled with a sense of expectation that in the world we would meet you.

And Lord, that we would hear your voice. So meet with us, we pray, as we pray in the name of Jesus.

[9 : 35] We thank you that you are the God who knows our need. And Lord, as we have glanced the news even this morning, we see so much in the way of need in this world which has fallen and drifted so far from.

And so we pray for all these places and all these situations that we have seen in the news over past days.

We pray for France. We pray for Mali. We pray for Belgium. We pray for Nigeria.

We pray for Iraq. We pray for Syria. We pray for Pakistan. We pray for the world that you created and the world that you love, but the world that is so broken.

Lord, we acknowledge that all around us and in us we see the effects of sin. We pray that you would forgive us. We pray that you would give us hearts that are repentant.

[10 : 40] And Lord, we pray that where there is such acute suffering, that you would bring relief. We pray, Lord, that where there is fear rising, even maybe in the hearts of some of us here, that we would lift our eyes from the circumstances of this life to the God who is sovereign over all.

And we pray for faith that we do trust you. So, Lord, hear our prayers and lead us in worship, we pray. Cleanse us from sin.

And go before us in all things. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come out to the front, please?

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. How's everybody today?

All fine, yeah? Good stuff. You had a good week? that good yeah tell me what have I got in my hand what did you do with the phone pardon dial numbers from Alistair what else Caitlin call somebody who wants to give it a try who wants to give it a try come on in Alistair where's John O'Connor today he'd have been up there in a jack flash how are you getting on there fine who are you phoning we can't listen to that speak to Alistair or something speak to me again

[13 : 02] Rachel and Sarah or something Rachel and Sarah you're phoning did you get through to them yet no not yet how come did you dial numbers L L oh what's the number one two three one two three one two three okay one two three you better push the button for a call on them that one there hello hello hello are they hearing you no they're not this is the children talking about telling the truth they're not hearing you can you thank you Alistair you can sit down now can you figure out why are they not hearing Alistair Grace or you tell me because they're at church because they're at church probably that's one one out one out one answer yeah um

Ailey Eve would have been giving me an answer too why are they hearing he just done one button he just done one button mm-hmm and there's more numbers needed than that John Roddy what do you think he doesn't have the password he doesn't have the password for the phone well this phone's got no password we're needing a more technical mind here I'm glad to see Anish's hand is up Anish come and explain to us the physics behind us come here what does it say on the phone it's flashing and alert just now what does it say see it out of range it's out of range it's out of range it's out of range thank you this is a phone that is out of range see this phone actually belongs to in our house out in Kyla's and it works as long as you're in the house you go to the end of the house it works a wee bit but once you go away it just says out of range so you could dial whatever numbers you wanted here and it would get you absolutely nowhere phone and phone and phone and phone and you would never get connected and some of you are probably looking and saying well that's just silly you should be using a mobile phone and we could use a mobile phone in some places could use a phone in here and it would work okay but a few points in the way between here and Kyla's Scalpian even the phone doesn't work it's out of range there's no coverage you know what we just sang a minute ago we sang in one of the verses

I love the Lord because my voice and prayer he is here and you know that when we pray what are we doing when we pray?

we talk to God we talk to God that's right when we pray we are talking to God and you know that whenever you call upon the name of God in prayer he always always always he is and so if you have a granny who's far away in Glasgow or Edinburgh today and you're wee bit worried about how she's doing you can pray and God will hear if you have a daughter who's all the way out in Nepal today and you're wondering how she's getting on and if she's going to be okay pray God will hear never ever when we come to God in prayer in faith in the name of Jesus do we get a message like this one saying out of range we can never ever put our hands together in prayer and get a message you're out of batteries no connection whenever we pray believe in in Jesus name

God will hear and so if we want some of the people that we love to know that God loves them and they're far far away today when we pray do you know that God's arms are long enough to reach them to reach them and to help them to know how much He loves them do you believe that?

[18:10] do you believe that boys and girls? do you believe that boys and girls? yes let's hear one wee story see a week last Wednesday at the prayer meeting Angus was there and we'd been praying for lots of different things and one of the things that we hadn't prayed about was Kirstie not Kirstie but Peggy in Nepal and so Angus at the end of the prayer meeting he says can I just say something please so he came up to the front and he said I just want to tell you about Peggy she's going on a journey tomorrow and it's a dangerous journey and we're a wee bit worried about how she'll get on so will we please please pray for Peggy tonight and tomorrow and so somebody prayed at the prayer meeting on Wednesday night and I'm sure lots of us were praying on the Thursday that God would keep Peggy safe and that she'd know that he's with her and he's looking after her do you know what happened next on the Thursday come and tell us Angus I should probably just say first of all that to reassure parents of any youth going to Nepal that when we travel in Nepal we always do it by getting a bus for ourselves and we never do it to make sure things are safe but when you're there on your own and you're there for two months and God's put you there the risk appetite is different in other words you have to make decisions in that relationship or trust with God and do it sensibly and Peggy had the decision to take about going from one end of the country to the other so she had a really long journey to make and she knew it was the right thing to do to do this journey and she had to do this journey and I should also say for everyone here just a bit of background the big country of India is treating the small country of Nepal as the largest now and they've stopped any fuel getting through to Nepal and it's a long story as to why that's happening but at the moment in Nepal there's very little petrol and very little diesel and it's chaos at the moment and there's very few buses running very very few so Peggy had a long journey to make very few buses running so she went to the bus park to do this journey that we were all praying about and someone there took her all the way to her bus and showed her the seat that she was to sit in and she sat in the seat and the bus filled up and there were people sitting on the roof and people inside and it was packed and all the way through that journey

Peggy was sitting there and we were praying and then a nice old man sitting beside her was giving her bits of bread to eat and trying to chat with her and Peggy was actually having a really good time and really enjoying it even though she was surrounded by people sitting on the roof and it was packed and it was busy and God was in charge but maybe God wanted us to know that he's in charge so God did something special just to show us that he hears our prayers so what he did was with only about 25 minutes left to go of this 14 hour journey that Peggy had actually been quite enjoying and God had been keeping her very safe even though there was all this danger around two people, two more people came onto this packed bus and one of them came up to Peggy now out of a country of 30 million people this Nepali guy came up to Peggy and said

I've been in your house in Harris there's only about 3 or 4 of our friends from Nepal who have been in our house in Harris and one of them got onto that bus and out of a country of 30 million people on a bus that was absolutely packed he made his way up to Peggy and said I've been in your house in Harris and I think God did that to let us know that he hears our prayers and that he was absolutely in charge and we don't need to worry about anything we just need to trust him ok boys and girls God hears our prayers he loves us and we can trust him so let's pray just now and thank him Lord God we thank you that you love us we thank you that as we pray you hear us and you answer and thank you for the amazing answers that we sometimes get but just help us to remember how much you are in charge we pray honour for Peggy that you would keep on looking after her and she would know that you are with her we pray for some people that we love we are far away some who are in hospital some who are on holiday other end of the world and we ask that you would look after them that they would know that you love them and we pray that we would always trust you and we pray these things in Jesus name

Amen we're going to sing now and we're going to sing about prayer mission praise 975 and the words are on the screen before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea if you could turn our bible please to Acts chapter 21 Acts chapter 21 just in light of that children's talk and the encouragement of knowing that God hears and answers prayer Mary and I have both received messages from different people in the last 24 hours or so about a wee baby called Isaac who is in Edinburgh just now and he's very young he was just born yesterday and has been very ill since he was born the couple that who are his mum and dad we don't know as good friends but we know of them and met them a couple of times but various people have asked that we would pray for this wee boy

Isaac I just got a message from the way in the church saying he's not had a good night he seems to be collecting a bit of food on his lungs I'm not sure why hopefully that will get checked out this afternoon sort of giving him a bit more help than when the folks who read this message saw him so we're just being asked to pray and if we as a congregation could all just be mindful of this wee boy Isaac can be praying for him over these next few hours which I understand will be critical and we'll just pray for a second Lord we do thank you that we can bring all our concerns and our anxieties to you in prayer and we pray for this wee boy Isaac and we ask that your hand would be upon him we pray for your protection over him and we pray for Ricky and for Ali and his mum and his dad and they ask that you would stay out and they would know that they are in your presence and that they would know that you are God and that you are close we pray these things in Jesus name

[25 : 53] Amen Acts chapter 21 and we continue in the study and we'll pick up at verse 37 I could have read from a wee bit earlier but unconsciously time and we'll read from verse 37 what we're doing here is we're kind of picking up halfway through a riot which is going on the Apostle Paul is yet again in the centre of a riot and the Jews are furious at the allegations that are being made about him and he took a gentile into the temple area which he didn't but this was the occasion of the riot and so the riot is going on the Roman soldiers come in they take hold of Paul by force they take him out of the riot for his own protection and verse 37 as the soldiers were about to take Paul into barracks he asked the commander may I say something to you?

that you speak Greek he replied why aren't you son aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists out into the desert some time ago? Paul answered I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia a citizen of no ordinary city please let me speak to the people having received the commander's permission Paul stood in the steps and motioned to the crowd when they were all silent he said to them in Aramea brothers and fathers listen now to my defence when they heard him speak to them in Aramea they became very quiet then Paul said I am a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today I persecuted the followers of this way to their death arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison as also the high priest and all the council can testify

I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished about noon I came near Damascus suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

who are you Lord? I asked I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting he replied my companions saw the light but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me what shall I do Lord? I asked get up the Lord said and go to Damascus there you will be told all that you have been assigned to do my companions led me by the hand into Damascus because the brilliance of the light had blinded me a man named Ananias came to see me he was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there he stood beside me and said brother Saul, receive your sight at that very moment I was able to see him then he said the God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will to see the righteous one and to hear words from his mouth you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard and now what are you waiting for?

get up, be baptized and wash your sins away calling on his name when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking quick he said to me leave Jerusalem immediately because they will not accept your testimony about me Lord, I replied these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you and when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him and the Lord said to me go, I will send you far away to the Gentiles the crowd listened to Paul until he said this then they raised their voices and shouted rid the earth of him he is not fit to live as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks he directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this as they stretched them out to flog him

[30 : 21] Paul said to the centurion standing there is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found out when the centurion heard this he went to the commander and reported it what are you going to do? he asked this man is a Roman citizen the commander went to Paul and asked tell me, are you a Roman citizen?

yes I am, he answered then the commander said I had to buy I had to pay a big price for my citizenship they were buying my brains but I was born a citizen Paul replied those who were about to question him withdrew immediately the commander himself was alarmed when he realised that he had put Paul a Roman citizen in chains in chains Amen may God bless our evening of his word to us God bless him will come now and meet us in prayer and down he seres live to reach us he is free the ones who are already cowardly the extra 1963 this prophet tribe equal to Lord God, not only does he say apple, but that ark stands for Corn ■■■■ and I raise there are two'matrous■■■ ktsue miel quelqu φάσι das

Lavez, say Appo■■■■■■ like to hear someoneosc■ años, a■ um excited to get on a offen 19 19 19 All the beauty of our Queercoápdafears, We Espina Fanaf ben■ suchen others, And give■■■ to friends of our people.

The rock that shows us are a great place of good consciousness. I'm gonna add one.

Iu■■■essw Enzo Vb This is not possible without peace.

[33 : 45] I would never have a day of hope. I would have been all right.

and here you are. We are waiting here, is going to be the parish that you have gone after yesterday today.

When me and I may dance I ask a musical There's a song that miinto believed His voice first That w hat the new tree the heavens fling that cut the tree and the sunlight we can give daily presence the heavens the heavens and the earth are made to go back.

Looking toward the other field the earth is called witchcraft and the earth is always so atual that ■■■■ had reward. My father and I flock to the United States to King King the■■■ Jack he came at the summit, which I am only a a of 16 years old.

And that I agree. This invitation has beenicaed, it's been a great, They should be given two ■■■ sekali of those Ob Indian people member who others ought to offer another day to fulfill them.

[36 : 26] Yet after they aspire to have■ oh is He said, two verses from Psalm 119, in Galat, Psalm 119, and verses 35 to 37.

Turn thou away my sight, and I shall hear a bounte in. In thy good and holy way, be pleased to quicken me. Confirm to me thy gracious word, which I did gladly hear, even to thy servant, Lord, who is devoted to thy fear.

These two standards to God's praise. Will ever start to dear on this feel. azk Piano music I'll see you next time.

I'll see you next time.

I'll see you next time.

[40 : 21] I'll see you next time.

I'll see you next time.

I'll see you next time.

I'll see you next time. We love to hear a good testimony. We love to hear about how Christ came to do our work in the life of a person.

We'll be back in Ephesians 3 this evening, Lord willing.

[42 : 40] Paul, as he addresses the Ephesians, he says to them in Ephesians 3, Surely you've heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me. Essentially what he's saying to them is, I expect you've heard my testimony.

I expect you've heard about how Christ broke into my life and started to do this work in my life. I expect you've heard how I became a Christian. And I'm sure pretty much all of them already had heard.

But it didn't stop Paul on various occasions telling them again. And so today we consider Paul's testimony. And so the sermon is not so much a sermon.

It's really looking at that testimony and just considering when and how we share our testimony. And so that's the opening question really.

Do you have a testimony? Somebody asks you, can you tell me how you came to trust in Jesus? Can you, like Paul did, give an answer?

[43 : 50] Give an account of how God came in and started to do this work of grace in our lives. Do we have a testimony? And if we have a testimony, we're given a masterclass here on how and when to share it.

And so three points, hopefully, in the time that we have. The first point to note here is that Paul was ever ready. Paul was ever ready to speak about Jesus.

I think it's the scouts that have that motto. You'll correct me, I'm sure, with nods or shakes. I think their motto, if I remember rightly, was always prepared.

And Paul was always prepared to give his testimony. How did Paul get the opportunity to share his testimony in this chapter?

Think about that one. Because it's a very unlikely scenario, really. Paul was not given a pulpit here. Paul was not responding to an invitation to speak at some Christian conference.

[45 : 01] Paul had no invitation of any kind extended to share a word about what Christ had done and was doing in his life. No invitation was extended.

But Paul saw an opportunity to speak. Most would have missed it, I expect. I expect I would have missed it. But Paul spotted it.

And so in the midst of what was unfolding chaos, if we look at chapter 21, just scan the verses. There isn't time to go into the details of it today.

But in the midst of what was unfolding chaos, Paul, you know, he arrives in Jerusalem. He's met by the leaders of the church there. He's met by the apostles.

They welcome him. They have a short prayer time. And then they say to Paul, listen, Paul, there's going to be probably some trouble here. People have heard that you're not for the Jewish religion.

[46 : 03] People have heard some things about you, Paul. And they're not happy. So Paul finds himself in the center of this unfolding chaos in verses 27 to 31.

And Paul is wrestled out of the grip of a bloodthirsty mob by these Roman soldiers, as we started to read. Paul, verse 37, is being taken back to the barracks.

His body will be badly beaten. He will be bloodied. He will be bruised. He will be physically shaken, having been set upon by this mob. And yet Paul composes himself in the strength that God gave him.

And he politely addresses the commander in verse 37. And he says, may I say something to you? Let's pause to apply that.

When did you and I last make a similar request? When did we last put our hand up and say, do you mind if I just say something to you about Jesus?

[47 : 20] Sometimes we are given opportunities at the most unexpected times. But we are called and we are taught here to be ever ready.

Always prepared in and out of season to give a reason for the hope that is in us. And so Paul was ready.

And so Paul was ready. Ever ready. Now do you notice, just as we think about this and move from verse 37 to 38, the question that comes to Paul next, if we distill the question down and paraphrase it, the question he's asked by the Roman soldier essentially is, are you a terrorist?

Because I think you're the guy that's a terrorist, aren't you? Are you a religious zealot, Paul? Verse 38, aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists out into the desert some time ago?

Aren't you that man, Paul? And for Paul, that was the opportunity that he spotted and he took to share a testimony about Jesus.

[48 : 45] He was hostile circumstances, high stakes, dangerous. Yeah, he saw and he took it. Just thinking about this, in light of some of the things that we're hearing, some of the things that we're seeing on social media and in the news and in debates and punditry, it's becoming quite uncomfortable to be a Christian today, increasingly so.

And one of the things I've noted in culture and discussion over the last few weeks, there are many people today in the media who are looking not only at newscasts, but also at Christians with a critical sphere.

And there are many people who are essentially looking at Christians and pointing the finger and saying, what are you all about, you people?

What actually are you all about? We're seeing all this horror in the news. We're seeing the most horrific circumstances. And it all seems to trace back to these religions.

Now, you're one of these religious people. You're a Christian. Tell me this. Are you the one? Are you one of these people that's behind all this terrorism that's going on in the world today?

[50 : 10] Is your attitude what's perpetuating this? Are you the reason the world is so fractured? And so violent?

Now, that is an uncomfortable culture to find yourself in the centre of. But does it afford us an opportunity to speak about Jesus?

In this aggressively violent culture, do we have the opportunity being given to us to speak to people about the Prince of Peace?

The one who came not to condemn, but to save. And the one who saved, not by taking lives from other people, but by laying down his life for others.

Not by striking out at his enemies, but by praying for the forgiveness of his enemies. Is that a message that we're called to proclaim again?

[51 : 29] In a hostile culture, are we aware to the opportunities that we are being given to speak about Jesus? And are we ready to take them? Paul was ready.

May I say something to you? He says, verse 37. Commander hears him speaking Greek. He's surprised. You speak Greek, verse 37 replied. And you're the Egyptian. He started a revolt.

Led 4,000 terrorists into the desert some time ago. Now, remember what we said last week. The Bible is true. The Bible is historical. And if that's something that you question, you can go from the biblical text to the historical writings.

Go to a man called Josephus. Check this one out. And we can find that at this time when Paul was moving and all his riots were unfolding, there was such an Egyptian Jew who was recognized as a terrorist.

He, together with his assassins, or as they were called, dagger men, terrorized the people for a period. And infiltrated crowds and did the maximum violence possible with these knives that they were so adept at using before he was taken down by the Roman governor, Felix, who we'll meet in the next chapter or two.

[52 : 50] Just to make the point in passing, this is true. Check history. You will find these characters. The insinuation that came to the Apostle Paul was not about an imaginary character.

It's a character that lived in history. So the question comes to Paul, are you that terrorist? Paul says, as a matter of fact, I'm not. It's a case of mistaken identity here.

I'm a Jew. Verse 39, and just carry on through. Paul answers, I'm a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city.

Please let me speak to the people. Let me tell the people, please, my story. And we can imagine the Roman commander there having had to deal with this huge unruly mob and looking out in the mob and still hearing the unrest and looking at Paul and thinking, well, it can't get any worse.

Maybe if I let him speak to them, they'll calm down. Or it will be destroyed. We'll have an easier afternoon. And so Paul's given the opportunity to make a defense.

[54 : 09] So Paul was ever ready. First point. To speak a word for Jesus. The second thing that we see here is how skillfully Paul established his common ground.

What's the second point? Establish common ground when giving your testimony. Sometimes you will hear people speaking.

We may know of teachers. I hope I'm not one of them. Socket to them, teachers. Sometimes you'll hear people or you'll hear people and they love nothing better than just beating people over the head with sermons and testimonies.

And they take Bible verses and they fire these verses with malice. Like bullets at people.

And it seems with every breath they take and every verse they give, they further alienate the people that they're called to speak to. Not Paul.

[55 : 16] 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 15. Peter the apostle says, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have.

Be ever ready. But do this with gentleness and respect. And what Peter advocated in that verse, we see Paul do in this chapter.

Paul demonstrates it in action. Paul is respectful in the way that he speaks. He addresses the people in their own language. When dealing with the Romans, he speaks to them in Greek.

When he goes out to the crowd and the crowd are ready to listen to him, he switches tongues to Aramaic. That was the language of the common man. And Paul is careful not to antagonize the crowd unnecessarily.

He's careful with the words and the language that he uses. But equally, he's not a coward. He doesn't shirk the responsibility placed upon him to tell the truth and proclaim the truth about Jesus.

[56 : 28] Remember the context here. The crowd is set against him. They're furious. They're violent. They're shouting, away with him. They've heard that Paul is telling the people to turn away from Moses.

It was untrue, but that's what they heard. They had heard that Paul despised the Jewish culture. That he despised the Jews. Again, untrue. But that's what they'd heard.

They'd heard that Paul had no regard for the rules, the etiquette of their temple. And he was brazenly breaking them. Again, untrue.

But that's what was going around. In the rumour mill in that place. They had essentially heard Paul was their enemy. And so Paul responds.

You think I hate the Jews? He says, I am a Jew. You think I'm turning the people away from Moses? Far from it. Give you a whole other sermon on how he wasn't.

[57 : 35] There's no time for that today. He says, you think I'm so different to you? And against you, you're wrong, he says. I was born in Tarsus. You know Tarsus.

I was brought up in Jerusalem. This is my home territory. I was educated under Gamaliel. The esteemed teacher. See how zealous I was against this Christian way?

You should know all this stuff, he's saying to the tribe. And if you don't know, he's pointing to the high priests and to the council. They all know. They'll all testify. They were my colleagues.

They were the people I worked with. See how committed I was as a Pharisee? And Paul is showing the crowd as he speaks to them.

That he understands them. That he's coming round with them. He's showing the crowd that he wants to where they were standing.

[58 : 36] It's not so long ago, he says, I was standing where you were standing, shouting for the blood of Stephen the martyr. I was there giving approvals. I was there holding the jackets of those who were stoning him to death.

It's just like me, says Paul. And as Paul shares this, it seems the crowd are gripped. What changed in this man's life?

What turned this man from such an esteemed Pharisee with such status and reputation into the man standing before us today? Was the question that was going through their minds, I'm sure.

And we'll get to that in just a moment. There are two lessons in application before we move on. The first thing here is we learn how to speak to people about Jesus if we are Christians.

And the second thing we learn here in application is why we speak to people about Jesus if we are Christians. So how do we speak to people about Jesus?

[59 : 48] Well, Paul was respectful. We have to be respectful. Always. Listen to how he addresses them in verse 1. Brothers and fathers.

The people who have just given him an absolute kick in. Brothers and fathers. Brothers and fathers. Listen to my defence. His tone is not superior.

It's not confrontational. It's not aggressive. It's not rude. It's gentle. Brothers and fathers. Listen to me.

Then going back a few verses to when he's speaking to the Roman soldiers. These hard groups of men. Rough as they came. And Paul just in the quiet says May I just say something to you please?

Respectful. And we are to be respectful always to everyone when we are speaking about Christ. Or when we are speaking to stop.

[60 : 57] Every creed. Every background. Every race. Every religion. As we speak to the Roman of Jesus. We are to speak with respect. We see wisdom here.

We see gentleness. We see a winsomeness about how Paul speaks. And we are giving lessons here to learn. This is how we speak to people about Jesus.

Why then do we speak to people about Jesus? Well, why would Paul ask to speak to the people who just try to kill him? Why? Why didn't he just give thanks for the fact that he was out of that crowd and hide away from them?

Why does he want to stand back up and address them? It's because he loved them. And he wanted to see these people saved and not cursed.

In Romans 9 we give an insight into the mind of Paul. He says He says I speak the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit.

[62 : 04] I have paid sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers.

My own race. The people of Israel. Paul wanted to speak to these Jews because he loved them.

And it's the love that he held for them that caused them to share Christ with them and moderated the whole tone and manner with which he spoke to them.

And whenever we speak to people about their sin and their need for Christ it must always be in love.

Never in anger. Never in superiority. Never with a judgmental proud mindset of I'm sorted and you're a mess.

[63 : 09] must always be in love. We are to speak the truth about Jesus in love.

And if we are lacking in love as we sometimes are remember the common ground that we share Christians with the most depraved sinner walking the earth.

We are all by nature sinful sons of Adam. Paul said to the crowd I once stood where you stood. I once was far away from Christ in this way.

And let every Christian myself first remember once we were far far away from Jesus. Once we were so so lost in sin and were it not for the love and for the grace of Jesus we would still be there.

Were it not for this encounter that we have had with Christ we would still lost. Amazing grace how sweet the sign that saved a wretch like me.

[64 : 31] Paul was ever ready. Paul was establishing common grounds he speaks and finally Paul speaks about his encounter with Christ.

and you'll be encouraged to know that as we studied this testimony in some detail not that long ago I'm not going to go into any kind of detail in terms of the testimony today I'm going to be brief but the point I want to make in looking at these verses is the Christian testimony must centre on Christ must centre on Christ as we are given opportunity to share a testimony we need to speak about the encounter we have had with Jesus and the Jesus who has in love come to us we need to speak about the work of grace that Jesus has done and is continuing to do in our lives sometimes you'll hear a testimony and it kind of goes like this I was sad and I was lost and I was broken and I was this and I was that and I was the next thing and then I met Jesus and I became a

Christian and now I'm happy and now I feel satisfied now I feel fulfilled now that's a testimony about my feelings not Christ that's a testimony that misses the point of a testimony Paul doesn't miss the point in giving us testimony he speaks about his encounter with Christ and let me give you four R's just as a heading to take out the door with you four R's that Paul gives us in his testimony and will be common to any testimony of anyone in this room who's a Christian the first thing Paul sees is he recognises Jesus first R is recognise Paul is going along the road and he recognises Jesus for the first time in his life he recognises Jesus as Lord we see that in verse 6 and following he's walking along the road and then there's this earth shattering moment bright light from heaven loud voice everyone sees the light only Paul hears the voice why is that because God is personal he speaks to you individually he speaks to Paul individually and he says

Saul Saul why do you persecute me who are you Lord says Saul I am Jesus of Nazareth and in that moment Paul recognised that Jesus was the Lord of heaven and earth and Paul recognised that everything he had built his life upon up until that point was false in any testimony we must recognise that Jesus Christ is the son of God he is the Lord almighty and Paul recognised that the Jesus he hated and he seemed crucified was actually alive he was resurrected he was pointing at him and calling him to trust him recognise second or repent it's possible to recognise

Jesus but not repent James 2 tells us that even the demons believe and they shudder Paul recognised Jesus and then he repented there's a spiritual turnaround and Paul through this encounter he's changed from a man who had rebelled against Jesus with such vigour to a man who listens to Jesus and said what do I do next what shall I do third are he received what did he receive verse 13 times long gone he received his son physically answered retreat and now everything looks different and Paul is now someone who was born again verse 16 we see that as he baptised as he professes faith he's told in verse 16 wash your sins away by calling upon him

[69 : 17] Jesus name and in this moment as Paul receives grace Saul the Pharisee dies Paul the Christian begins to live final thing he replans not only was Paul the Christian born but Paul the apostle was commissioned and all Paul's old plans went out the window now he's under new management so there's a very quick 4 hour tour of Paul's conversion recognises Jesus as Lord repents of his sin receives the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and replans his whole life as he submits to Christ and says what do you want me to do that's a testimony do you have a testimony it likely won't involve flashing lights and thundering voices from heaven but that's a testimony do you have one and are you willing to share it that's great heavenly father we thank you that when we were dead in transgression and sin you were the god who calls the dead to life when we were wandering far from

Jesus we thank you that Jesus is the one who comes and who draws us who lose us who sometimes like the apostle Paul discovered arrests us and Lord we pray that each one of us would know the reality of that encounter with Christ and even Lord if you were working in that way in the lives of some here at this time we pray that there would be that recognition that Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth son of God risen king and in recognizing we pray Lord that we would repent turn away from sin we would receive the grace that you are so willing to give us Lord that grace that was worked out at the cross of Christ and if you are Lord as you are then you must reign over our whole lives and that often would require a complete replan may we be submissive enough to bow to you in time

Lord we know that every knee will bow when we go from time into eternity so hear our prayers and part us with your blessing and as we go from here Lord we pray that those who are in Christ would not be ashamed to say that we are in Christ we pray this in Jesus name amen we sing to conclude mission praise 799 the words on the screen 799 all I once held dear filled my life upon all this world revered rewards to own all I once thought gain I have tainted loss spent and worthless now compared to this knowing you Jesus knowing you and I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the

Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more amen